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**U.S. ARRESTS 9 AFGHANI NATIVES ON CHARGES
OF IMPORTING HEROIN FROM PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN**

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, ANTHONY PLACIDO, the Special Agent in Charge of the New York Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration, and KEVIN P. DONOVAN, the Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, announced the arrests of 9 individuals on charges of importing more than half a million dollars' in heroin into the United States from Pakistan and Afghanistan, and distributing that heroin in the New York Area.

According to a criminal Complaint unsealed today in Manhattan federal court, the 9 defendants - and 3 others who have been charged but not yet arrested - participated in a conspiracy to import more than eight kilograms of heroin into the U.S. over an 18-month period, often concealing drugs inside heat-sealed plastic tubing sewn into the seams of traditional Afghani women's clothing. All of the defendants are natives of Afghanistan who

are currently living in New York and Pakistan.

According to the Complaint, a confidential witness (CW-1) negotiated with several of the defendants, including MOHAMMAD DAUD RAHIMI, AHMADULLAH BABURY and ABDUL WAHAD, to have heroin sent from Pakistan to a post office box in Manhattan, which the DEA had set up as an undercover mailbox. To facilitate the shipment of heroin to the post office box, RAHIMI instructed CW-1 to change the name on the mailbox from "M. Khan" to an "American-sounding" name because RAHIMI believed that a Muslim name would draw law enforcement attention. Ultimately, CW-1 received several shipments totaling approximately 550 grams of heroin sent from Pakistan to the post office box hidden in the seams of Afghani women's dresses.

Also according to the Complaint, in April 2002, WAHAD met with CW-1 in Karachi, Pakistan, where WAHAD was living. During the meeting WAHAD told CW-1, among other things, that:

- a. Christmas was the best time to send heroin overseas because the high volume of mail volume overwhelmed law enforcement in the United States.
- b. WAHAD would be using a new technique to conceal heroin inside of clothing, which consisted of a high-quality plastic that could withstand heat sealing and was impossible for law enforcement to detect. The technique takes approximately 10 days to

conceal one kilogram of heroin inside the clothing.

- c. WAHAD obtained opium from fields in Jalalabad, Afghanistan and Northern Afghanistan. Once obtained, WAHAD processed the opium into heroin by utilizing acid and high-quality chemicals that he obtained from Germany.

As alleged in the Complaint, in August 2002 MOHAMMADDIN AZIZI supplied a different cooperating witness (CW-2) with almost 7 kilograms of heroin inside a gym bag in the back of a minivan owned by AZIZI. Also according to the Complaint, AZIZI told CW-2 that he (AZIZI) received his heroin from a source in Pakistan who mailed heroin to AZIZI sewn inside women's middle eastern clothing.

The other defendants charged in the conspiracy are ALI AHMED, MOHAMMAD ISMAEL, ABDUL RASHID, TAJ MOHAMMAD, KHALIL PACHA, SHAH MAHMOOD, HAMAYON SALIMI and SHAH WALI.

RAHIMI, BABURY, ISMAEL, RASHID, MOHAMMAD, PACHA, AZIZI, SALIMI and WALI were arrested this morning and are scheduled to be presented on the charges in the Complaint before United States Magistrate Judge DOUGLAS F. EATON later today. The defendants are facing a maximum term of imprisonment of life and a mandatory minimum term of 10 years' imprisonment. In addition, each

defendant faces a fine of up to \$4 million.

Mr. COMEY praised the investigative efforts of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Assistant United States Attorneys DAVID P. BURNS, NEIL BAROFSKY and SAMUEL G. WILLIAMSON are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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